

Belmont, August

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Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

August Belmont

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

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Belmont,
August

THE SHEET-PER-SHEET DEMOCRACY.

Speech of August Belmont.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN—I am deeply grateful for this kind and interesting reception, which itself is more due to the patriotic work in which we are all engaged than to any personal merit of my own. Four years ago I stood on this very place pleading the cause of the Union and the constitution against the combined efforts of Northern secessionists and Southern slaveholders, and advocating the election of the patriot and statesman—the lamented Douglas—against the then obscure candidate of a sectional party. (Applause.) The democracy was defeated, and our country given up to civil war and desolation, because we had become divided by the selfish machinations of Southern secessionists, aided by their misguided friends of the North, who broke up the Charleston Convention. Permit me to dwell a few moments on the present political position of some of the former champions of Southern rights. I will not speak here of the Southern leaders, who, under Jeff. Davis, are waging an unholy war against our government. Grant, Sherman and Farragut will take care of them. (Applause.) Our business is with their former friends at the North. Here we have, first and foremost, Gen. and Mr. Butler, of Massachusetts—(applause)—who, at Charleston, gave, during fifty-two ballots, his vote for Jeff. Davis, the only vote cast for him in the convention, and then left that body to sit in council with the Southern traitors. Then we had Daniel S. Dickinson—(renewed applause)—who denounced the Northern democracy for not readmitting at Baltimore the seceding delegates, who, under the leadership of Yancey, had broken up the convention at Charleston. On our beaded knees we ought to have entreated them to return—that was Mr. Dickinson's advice; and I am compelled to add here that estimable gentleman John A. Dix, who, in 1860, advocated to an extraordinary address to the convention more ultra Southern views than the Breckinridge platform itself, and who, as postmaster of James Buchanan, was the head and front of the Breckinridge organization in this city. The abolition reports of this morning contain an address of General Dix of a very different character than the one just alluded to. Without entering here into the merits of that extraordinary document, permit me only to point your attention to the following proposition contained in that address:—

An amendment of the constitution which shall render the President ineligible after one term of service.

In the face of this Mr. Dix and his friends intend to vote for a second term of Mr. Lincoln. The General, after opposing in 1848 the regular democratic nomination of General Cass, and in 1860 that of Stephen A. Douglas, will now show his consistency by voting for Lincoln in opposition to the principle laid down by himself. Thus we find these gentlemen in the ranks of the republican party strayed under the black banner of abolitionism against the party of the Union and the constitution. The ultra-secessionist power and office are as irresistible to them under Lincoln as they were under Buchanan. They and some lesser lights of the same stamp are now joining with all the zeal of neophytes in the mad outcry raised by their new allies against the democratic party and its noble leader, George B. McClellan. (Cheers for General McClellan.) In the wake of these more prominent repegades from the democratic faith we have seen a call for a mass meeting, signed by a number of disappointed politicians, and a few baboons of our city who have added a few more millions to their wealth by this terrible war. Those gentlemen call themselves democrats—(laughter)—democrats of the Jacksonian school—(renewed laughter)—and allege as the reason for not supporting our ticket the wording of our platform and the character of our candidates. Now, permit me to detain you for a few moments in order to see by what right those gentlemen call themselves democrats, and how much the Chicago platform has to do with their support of Abraham Lincoln. Here we have, in the first instance, ex-Judge Pierpont, who, for the last three years, has been the confidential friend and agent of Secretary Stanton, the bitter enemy of General McClellan; and it is said by those who profess to know that this friendship has proved quite lucrative to the honorable ex-judge. (Laughter.) Is it to be wondered that he should wish its continuance for four years more? Is it to be wondered that in a speech of last evening, reported to all the abolition papers, he should assail, in a spirit of the bitterest partisanship, the character and the services of General McClellan? His patron of the War Department has for the past two years prosecuted with the most malignant hatred the man to whom the country owes the Army of the Potomac, the general who twice saved the capital from the invading rebel forces, and who offered to share the fate of his comrades as a common soldier, when deprived of his command by the intrigues of Halleck and Stanton. Judge Pierpont could not show his gratitude for past favors and favors to come more effectively than by his most unfair personal attack on General McClellan. I had looked for this first public demonstration of the Judge with a good deal of curiosity, as I had hoped to obtain by it some explanation in reply to a statement contained in the following article of the *World* newspaper, and which thus far I have not yet seen contradicted:—

JUDGE PIERPONT AND THE BOGUS WAR DEMOCRATS.
The following letter comes to us endorsed by the signature of a gentleman whose name is at the service of Judge Pierpont. If he desires a voucher for his authenticity, we confess our own surprise at its statements, and, in common with the public, should be glad to know what considerations have worked such a change in Judge Pierpont's mind since September:—

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 25, 1864.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE WORLD.
My attention has been called to a manifesto addressed to "war democrats," and published in the *New York Tribune*—a very singular medium of communication, and would suppose, with democrats of an abode of opinion. Among the names of the signers of this document I perceive that of "Edwards Pierpont." If this be the gentleman otherwise known as "Judge Pierpont" I have a few remarks to make touching him. We chanced to be fellow passengers in the *Perle*, a Cunard steamship, and left Liverpool in the month of September. We had not upon our departure on September 10, as yet learned who was the nominee of the Chicago Convention, and, of course, we were all very much excited on the subject. There seemed to be but one or two administrations on the ship, out of some hundred and eighty or one hundred and ninety passengers, the democrats being very generally in favor of General McClellan for the nomination. This Judge Pierpont, after

holding back for some time, finally declared himself a democrat of the strictest school. He said, however, that there was no earthly chance of the nomination of General McClellan; that the democratic party would not stultify itself by nominating any man who had had any connection with this war; that the war was an utter failure; that the only prospect of the salvation of the nation, or the restoration of the Union, lay in a cessation of hostilities and a general convention of all the States. He said that none of these purposes could be accomplished without a change of administration, and that, therefore, it was the solemn duty of every patriot to labor for that primary and fundamental object, without which all efforts were fruitless, all hope vain of the salvation of our republican government. He said to me, in conclusion, "With a change of administration there might yet be a way to save the republic entire; without it, it was past praying for." This was the substance of a conversation of two hours or more, in the presence of my wife, in all of which, as general propositions, I concurred, except that General McClellan could not be nominated. I assured the Judge that he could and would and should be—as he was, above and beyond any living man, the embodiment of the political necessities of the American people. Now, you may imagine my surprise to see the same of this same Judge Pierpont, four or five months later, the earnest expression of the above recited views, giving his name and any influence he may possess to the prolongation of that very policy and the support of that identical administration which he thus publicly declared would insure the downfall of the republic.

VIATOR.

What do you say to these sound principles of a war

democrat of the new school, who cannot support the Chicago platform, and must bolt the regular democratic nominee to vote for Abraham Lincoln? (Laughter.) Then you have the member of Congress from the First district, the Hon. Mr. Stebbins, who has just resigned his seat because he says that his opinions are no longer in unison with those of his constituents. I doubt very much if there ever existed any such unison between him and them. He was elected two years ago by the loyal democracy of the First district, who then, as they are now, were for the "Union at all hazards," but were not in favor of Mr. Lincoln or the fatal financial policy of his Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Stebbins, for many months after his election, was the avowed advocate of an immediate and unconditional peace, and I could cite—here many good democrats, personal friends of his, who had to use all their influence in order to make him abandon those pernicious views. I believe they succeeded so far as to make him, for a short time at least, after he took his seat in Congress, as near to the mark of a sound democrat as he ever was or ever will be. But we find him soon fascinated by the transcendent statesmanship of Mr. Lincoln's Secretary of State and the financial genius of Mr. Chase. So much so that his great effort in Congress is a grand, eloquent eulogy of the irredeemable paper issue of that exploded Secretary of the Treasury. ("Good." Laughter.) And the republican papers of this morning, selected for the first time for the diffusion of democratic principles, contain a letter of his, in which he lectures the democratic party for not doing justice to the efficiency and talent of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. (Loud laughter.) It will be refreshing to Messrs. Stanton and Welles to read praises from a democratic pen, which their own party has not been willing to accord to them. Is it strange, after all this, that Mr. Stebbins does not agree in sentiment with his constituents? They seem to have come to that conclusion some time before he did, when they refused to put him in renomination for Congress. The Hon. F. B. Cutting can hardly claim that he leaves the democratic party on account of our platform. Nobody can entertain personally a more sincere regard for that gentleman than I do, still, we all know that he has not been with us since 1862, when we did, what we intend to do next Tuesday, elect Horatio Seymour Governor of this State. (Tremendous cheers.) Then you have the seceder and seceder, Mr. Peter Cooper—(laughter)—who appears in the character of a war democrat, after having voted, in 1856, for Fremont, and in 1860 for Lincoln. (Renewed laughter.) Both Mr. Moses Taylor and Mr. A. T. Stewart signed last spring a circular in favor of Mr. Lincoln's re-election, and they probably forgot that circumstance when they now profess to abandon our banner because they pretend to see lurking in its folds a disgraceful peace, notwithstanding McClellan and Pendleton have inscribed on it—"The Union and the constitution at all hazards, peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must." (Enthusiastic cheers.) The political antecedents of the other signers of that call are of the same questionable character. There is, for instance, Mr. William H. Webb, a wealthy shipbuilder and government contractor, who builds magnificent vessels for which he receives still more magnificent prices from Mr. Welles, but who has not voted a democratic ticket for many a year. But I have already dwelt too long on these proselytes to the abolition faith. The great democratic party cannot suffer from the attacks of this or any other set of men. (Loud applause.) It is the party which, by its unwavering adherence to the constitution, and by its unflinching firmness and strict regard to treaty stipulations in all our domestic and foreign relations, has brought our country to a greatness and prosperity which had rendered it the admiration and envy of the nations of the earth, until, in an evil hour, the madness of sectional fanaticism placed Abraham Lincoln in the Presidential chair. (Applause.) It was a democratic administration which carried us triumphantly through the Mexican war, giving us the golden empire of the Pacific, soon to become the highway of the commerce of the East. (Applause.) It was a democratic administration which resisted firmly and successfully British pretensions to Oregon and Central America. (Applause.) It was under a democratic administration that American influence compelled Denmark to abandon the feudal sound dues which for centuries she had imposed upon the commerce of the world. It was under a democratic administration that Kozta was liberated from the claws of Austrian tyranny, proving to the world that our proud flag gave protection to the martyrs of liberty of all nations who sought asylum under its folds. (Loud cheers.) I had the honor to represent our country abroad when Mr. Marcy wrote his Kozta letter, and my heart swelled with pride and gratitude that I could claim the title of an American citizen. (Applause.) How do we stand now, under Mr. Lincoln's administration, in our relations with the great powers of

Europe? How are American rights respected and protected abroad? We all remember with shame and indignation the case of Arguelles, a Spanish refugee, who was seized in this city by the federal officers, and, without even the form of a trial, given up to the Cuban authorities. We have no extradition treaty with Spain, so that no possible excuse could exist for this disgraceful and arbitrary act of Mr. Seward. (Hisses for Seward.) Of whatever crime Arguelles may have been accused in Cuba, I doubt whether modern history can point to a grosser outrage against the sacred right of asylum. Place the case of Kozta alongside that of Arguelles, and you obtain an idea of the difference between a democratic and republican administration. (Applause.) The humbugastic denials of our Secretary of State, who has now for nearly four years predicted every four months that the backbone of the rebellion was broken, and that it was to be completely crushed within sixty days, have cast contempt and ridicule upon him and the administration of which he is the prime minister. His conduct in the famous Trent affair, when he refused to give up the rebel commissioner Dr. M. A. Lincoln, and only yielded in the face of the British ultimatum, was one of the most humiliating phases in the history of our foreign relations since we have been a people. Had such an occurrence taken place when a Slavery or a Cass was at the head of the State Department, those prisoners would have been surrendered at once, and by our own free action sent to England before they were claimed, if their capture was illegal; but if they were lawfully taken, the wimpy power of France and England could not have obtained their release from those democratic statesmen, and the American people would have established them if every city on our seaboard had been laid in ashes by the combined fleets of these great powers. Look at our commerce, the sails of which four years ago whitened every sea of both hemispheres—our commercial flag chased from the ocean by a few paltry privateers of the Confederates, who, if we had a competent Secretary of the Navy, and all long ere this had had a single port either on the Atlantic or the Gulf. Can anybody doubt that, with an efficient navy under such men as Farragut, Dupont, Rogers and Porter, we could not have taken Charleston, Mobile, Savannah and Wilmington within six months after the war began. But Mr. Welles, notwithstanding the immense resources placed at his disposal, gave to the rebels all the time they could possibly desire to make those ports the strongholds they now are. The fact is, the present administration did not know how to preserve peace, nor does it know how to acquire it, notwithstanding the many victories gained on land and sea by our gallant navy and army. We have been told over and over again that the rebellion was an ill-legal war, that the people of the South are tired of the war, that their armies are demoralized and on the point of dispersing. Are we for all this any nearer to an honorable peace within the Union than we were three years ago? Has the administration tried to profit by the blood-stained laurels of McClellan after the battle of Antietam—(tremendous cheers)—of Grant when he took Vicksburg—(cheers)—of Farragut when he took New Orleans—(renewed cheers)—and paced Mobile at our mercy—(cheers)—of Sherman's glorious capture of Atlanta—(loud cheers)—or Meade's overwhelming victory at Gettysburg? (Applause.) No attempt at negotiation, no offer of an honorable settlement, which, even if under the military terrorism of Jeff. Davis, it should not have led to immediate peace, would at least have strengthened the Union party at the South and given them power, with the aid of the strong arm of the federal forces, to free themselves of their tyrannical leaders. And these gentlemen, is the only way in which we can ever hope to restore the Union and bring peace and prosperity to our common country. Give to the South the choice between an honorable peace under the Union and the constitution or a fruitless struggle against the irresistible power of a united North, and you will see State after State leave the confederacy of Jefferson Davis and return to their allegiance under the Union. But who can doubt that the South will fight to the last extremity if the fatal policy of condonation and forcible emancipation is to be persisted in; and that is the policy to which Mr. Lincoln and his party are pledged, should they be able to keep themselves in power. Thus the war is to become a war of subjugation or extermination, and do you know what it means to conquer and subjugate a people of six millions of freemen? It took the ablest generals of republican France more than ten years before they could subjugate the small department of the Vende, which was only finally pacified by the great Napoleon himself. The whole power of Russia, with its colossal military despotism, was nearly half a century before conquering the small province of Circassia. Poland and Hungary were not subjugated by the sword of Russia and Austria alone, but tardy concessions had to assist in their pacifications. (Applause.) Look at what we have achieved ourselves in three and a half years with a sacrifice of nearly four hundred thousand men, and the accumulation of a national debt of \$2,000,000,000. Our army and navy have earned immortal glory and the lasting gratitude of their countrymen by their devotion and heroism, and yet though we hold the Mississippi and several important points on the Atlantic and the Gulf, we are far from having the conquest of the South within our grasp. The lion-hearted Grant, whose heroic bravery is only equalled by his stubborn tenacity, has, with the largest and best army ever placed under one man on this continent, and with the power and resource of a patriotic people to back him, not yet taken Richmond after six months and the sacrifice of over one hundred thousand of our best troops. Can any one after all these heartrending experiences have any doubt as to the fearful calamities in store for us if Mr. Lincoln should succeed in having himself re-elected—a war to the knife between the two sections until the weaker is exterminated, and the other left in the agonies of exhaustion, a whole generation swept away; a national debt accumulated that debt amounts now to about two thousand millions, which, increasing at the rate of three or four millions a day, will, at the end of another four years' war (and, take my word for it, this war will last as long as Mr. Lincoln can retain himself in office) amount to more than seven thousand million

dollars. The interest on this at six per cent per annum would be four hundred and twenty million dollars a year in gold, or at the present price of gold, and who can hope that, with such a war and the financial policy of the present administration, the price of gold will not go twice as high. This would be an annual interest of one thousand millions dollars to pay on our debt. No country in the world can bear such a burden without either falling into the disgrace and miseries of national bankruptcy, or entailing upon its citizens, for generations to come, a load of taxation which must undermine its labor and industry, and reduce its laboring classes to poverty and pauperism. In the face of all these evidences, clear as the light of day to every mind, which is not blinded by corruption or fanaticism, the democratic party as well as its candidates are denounced by an unscrupulous party press as disloyal and as the open allies of the rebels, because we expect to conquer an honorable peace within the Union and the constitution, instead of following the mad career to ruin under the lead of sectional fanatics. (Applause.) While the democratic generals are fighting our battles—while Grant, Meade and Hancock are pushing on towards Richmond—while the gallant Sherman is driving Beauregard before him—while the hero of the Shenandoah valley, the dashing Sheridan, is gathering fresh laurels—(cheers)—we see the republican generals of Mr. Lincoln try their prowess on a more peaceful field of battle. Hooker, when last heard from, was operating in Illinois in the new character of a stump speaker. General Burdette—(cheers)—is

busy here in making speeches in favor of Lincoln and abolition, both undoubtedly hoping for a better result in November than they were able to achieve at Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg. ("Good.") Thus the democratic party and its leaders stand where they always stood—"for the Union, the constitution and the law"—alike opposed to Southern secessionists and Northern fanaticism. (Loud cheers.) A leading journal in this city, which has maintained in this Presidential contest a strict neutrality—a neutrality in which I am sorry to say my humble self does not appear to have been included—has found fault with our party for not having declared in favor of a more vigorous foreign policy, and the reaffirmation of the Monroe doctrine. I need not tell you, my democratic fellow-citizens, that the democratic party does not undertake more than one great task at a time. Let us first restore the Union and the constitution, and then we will settle our other accounts. (Cheers.) General McClellan—(loud cheers)—has pledged himself and the party "for the Union at all hazards." Our candidate for the Vice Presidency has declared for the restoration of the Union and the constitution, "peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must." (Renewed cheers.) On that platform we intend to elect them, and redeem their pledges to the American people and the world, and when once again we shall, by the blessing of the Almighty, be a reunited and powerful people of freedom, then the democracy of this mighty Union will say to the powers of the earth, that the North American continent was intended for republican institutions, and that the temple of liberty, raised by the fathers of the republic, must span its dome from ocean to ocean, and from the lakes to the isthmus. And now, gentlemen, let me entreat you, in conclusion, to use every honorable means within your power in order to accomplish the great work before us. In six days from now the life or death of this great republic will be decided. Let the Empire City be, as ever, true to the Union and the constitution, let us roll up a majority of forty thousand for McClellan and Pendleton, and the sun of the 8th of November will, under a benignant Providence, set upon a free and redeemed people, and a new era of greatness and prosperity will follow the dark days through which we are now passing. (Loud and repeated cheers.)

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